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ABSTRACT

The model for school-linked services is based on the ideal of providing a coherent and seamless web among school professionals and other service agencies. However, schools are often organized around specialized functions that are not wholly aligned and coordinated in function and purpose. This paper examines the nature of schools as "aggregative" (as opposed to "integrative") organizations and the implications for implementation of an integrated, school-linked-services reform initiative. The theoretical framework of "new institutionalism" (March and Olsen, 1984; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991) is used to analyze the design and implementation of a neighborhood-based, school-linked-services effort, referred to as Community-Based Collaboration for Families (CBCF), in a medium-sized midwestern city. Data were obtained from a longitudinal, qualitative analysis of three urban schools and a low-income neighborhood. The paper suggests that reform initiatives such as school-linked services fail to consider the nature of school organization, thereby contributing to the aggregative, rather than coordinated and systemic, functions of schools. Although the services might be integrated, the school as an organization is not: the aggregative school design, which institutionalizes functions into a set of subsystems, contrasts with the coherent, integrative purpose and structure of integrated services. Reforms therefore constitute "add-ons." No matter how tightly integrated and collaborative the school-linked-services model, the school organization is not designed to respond similarly. (Contains 31 references). (LMI)

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AGGREGATIVE OR INTEGRATIVE SCHOOL-LINKED SERVICES? ATTEMPTING TO LINK AN INTEGRATIVE REFORM DESIGN WITH AN AGGREGATIVE SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

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Aggregative or Integrative School-Linked Services? Attempting to link an integrative reform design with an aggregative school organizational design

ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine the nature of schools as "aggregative" (as opposed to integrative) organizations (Cibulka, 1996), and I discuss the implications of school organization vis-a-vis the implementation of an integrated school-linked services reform initiative. In this analysis, I question the feasibility of implementing an integrated reform idea into an organization that is aggregatively organized. I begin by placing this discussion in the context of literature on school organization. I rely on the theoretical perspective of organizational sociology to inform my analysis, specifically 'new institutionalism' (March and Olsen, 1984; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). I argue, using data from a longitudinal qualitative database, that reform initiatives, such as school-linked services, fail to take into account the nature of school organization, thereby contributing to the aggregative, rather than coordinated and systemic functions of schools. I conclude that while the services might be integrated, the school as an organization is not. No matter how tightly integrated and collaborative the school-linked services model, the school organization is not designed to respond similarly.

INTRODUCTION

If we want to promote and support the primary purpose of education - learning for all students - then it is important to ask if current organizational arrangements of schools and the design of school-linked reforms contribute to meeting this primary purpose. Advocates of school-linked integrated services argue that our systems have failed children with high needs because of organizational fragmentation (Gardner, 1990, 1992). On the one hand, the current literature on school reform suggests that reform efforts are "chaotic" (Smith and O'Day, 1991; Fuhrman, 1993; Fuhrman Elmore and Massell, 1993); on the other, the literature on school organization points to the decoupled, loosely coupled, or as one scholar (Cibulka, 1996) put it, the "dysfunctional" nature of school organization. Together, these literatures do not always make clear what the linkages are between reform objectives that are designed to meet the educational needs of children and the nature of school organization. At a macro-level, school professionals share the goal of educating students and seeing them through the

completion of their K-12 experience. But, at a micro-level, school staff members such as administrators, teachers and student services professionals are locked into their professional specialization and are not "coupled" or aligned coherently within the school organization. As well, there is variability in purpose, practice and function among staff members.

The model of a recent reform initiative, school-linked services, is based on the ideal of providing a coherent and seamless web among school professionals and other service agencies. And while coherence may seem logical, the "uncoupled" and "dysfunctional" nature of schools does not seem to make a logical accommodation for such a reform. Observing the discontinuity between the reform objectives and the nature of the school as an organization, I examine the implementation of a neighborhood-based school-linked services initiative around the following question: What is the school's capacity to be a part of an integrative services reform design when the school itself is aggregative in organizational design?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Some educational scholars have characterized the organization of schools as a series of incremental functions and specializations that are added to schools to accommodate social reforms (Kirst and Meister, 1985; Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Citing earlier organizational theories such as March and Olsen's (1986) 'garbage can' theory and Lindblom's (1959) theory of 'muddling through,' Cibulka makes the case that school organization fails at reform and effective implementation because of problems of coordination and control. The problems with school organization, he claims, are because schools are organized into subsystems with specialized functions and standardized routines, which in turn make decision-making and

reform implementation difficult. The focus of dysfunction theory, according to Cibulka, is "the inability of organization actors to perceive problems clearly, respond to them strategically, or process policies in a manner likely to lead to goal achievement" (1996: 10).

Over the course of the past century, subsystems of separate functions and specializations have been incrementally institutionalized in schools adding new functions and accompanying professionals to the school organization. Early in the century, "the progressives" recognized the near-desperate conditions of immigrant and working class children. Reformers introduced such ideas as "vacation schools" (summer school), school meals, "visiting teachers" who were school social workers in teacher's clothing, vocational guidance counseling, school nurses and hygiene classes, and physical education (Tyack, 1992). Congress instituted the School Lunch Act of 1947 (cited in Rowan, 1982) reasoning that "The brain cannot gnaw on problems while the stomach is gnawing on its empty self" (quoted in Sedlak and Schlossman, 1985: 373). Kindergarten classes were originally introduced as "preventive charities" to cure "urban social evils" (Tyack and Cuban, 1995: 65). During the 1960s, like the earlier social reform era, schools witnessed the introduction of more reform initiatives that were built around child poverty issues. Reforms that were linked to the schools included a focus on children's handicapping conditions, dropout rates, and early childhood programs (i.e., Head Start) among many others.

With every social reform that was related to children, there seemed to be an accompanying professional layer added to the school (Rowan, 1982; Cohen and Spillane, 1993; Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Some scholars see this incremental institutionalization of value systems as the introduction of burgeoning service fragmentation (Kirst and Kelley,

1995). The study here concerns these observations, that schools are an aggregate of functions that are not wholly aligned and coordinated in function and purpose.

In the Weberian notion of organization, "structure" is assumed to be an effective and efficient way to coordinate and control activities in an organization. This conventional wisdom perpetuated a myth, according to Meyer and Rowan (1978), that coordination and control are critical elements of formal organizations assuming that routines, rules and procedures should be followed uniformly in conjunction with prescribed organizational activities. Weick (1976) first observed that the subscription to routines, rules and procedures - structures of an organization - was more "loosely coupled" from school activities than Weberian organizational theorists assumed. What is meant by coupling is that authority between governance and staff activities is either tight and hierarchical or loose and autonomous. In schools, Weick observed, rules are frequently violated, decisions are not implemented as prescribed, and evaluation of activities is not tightly coupled to activities. In the now classic organizational theory about the nature of school organization, Weick (1976) and Meyer and Rowan (1978) concluded that structural coordination and control is missing in schools. Schools are organized, or coupled, much less tightly than conventional bureaucratic models - an observation that departs from the rational-actor model that assumes logical order and subscription to order.

To guide my study on schools as organizations and the implementation of integrated school-linked services, I rely on New Institutionalism (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; March and Olsen, 1984) as a theoretical framework. New Institutionalism is a theory that explains the link between organizational patterns and forms of social structure. March and Olsen

(1984) see that neo-institutional thought moves organizational theory in a new direction by problematizing the rational-actor assumptions that undergird most current organizational thinking. In other words,

neo-institutional thought moves organizational theory beyond looking for solutions through outcomes, and instead moves toward focusing on process. This is an important theoretical perspective in light of my research on school-linked integrated services and the coordinative processes among otherwise autonomous organizations.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study is about the design and implementation of a neighborhood-based school-linked services effort, which I will refer to as Community-Based Collaboration for Families (CBCF).[1] CBCF was initiated by city and county policy makers from a mid-sized Midwestern city, and is loosely based on the work of Melaville and Blank (1989; 1991). The initiative, CBCF, was designed as preventive, holistic, and family and child-centered. The framers of the initiative included top policy makers from the departments of Human Services, Public Health, Police and the city's school district. These policy makers set out in 1992 to implement an integrated, collaborative reform idea that would "re-orient services according to middle school attendance areas, and bring comprehensive services to families in need in their own communities" (County document, 1992).

The onus of implementing CBCF was on "street level bureaucrats," that is, by neighborhood-based service teams who represented the four key participating agencies of

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[1] Per an agreement with the study participants, Community-Based Collaboration for Families is a pseudonym.

CBCF: a school representative (usually a school social worker), a county social worker, a city public health nurse, and a city police officer. The CBCF service teams established offices in neighborhood apartment complexes, using bedrooms as offices, and living/dining rooms as conference rooms. The neighborhoods in which CBCF service teams were located were characterized as "high crime and low-income." In other words, the neighborhoods were targeted to address the pressing criminal activity and the child and family-related needs that accompany poverty. In this study, I examined only one of the neighborhoods, Walnut Grove.[2]

The stated goals and purposes of CBCF are multiple and, in some ways, ever-emerging as needs and conditions warrant changes. The initial mission, as stated in public documents, was designed to: 1) coordinate services and reduce duplication of efforts; 2) make services more accessible and customer-focused; 3) increase efforts to prevent and intervene earlier in children and family problems; and 4) develop ideas for broader systems change.

The policy makers framed the initiative on the premise that the four key agencies (human services, health, police and the school district) would collaborate in the interest of integrating and linking crisis prevention and intervention services. The school district was not the lead agency behind this initiative, but was of equal status "at the table" with the other involved agencies. However, the school district had limited representation in the oversight of the school-linked services initiative. Only one central office administrator was assigned to the oversight of this effort, and this representative was not a former classroom teacher or

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[2]. Walnut Grove, also a pseudonym, was one of two original pilot sites of CBCF. Since the initial conceptualization of CBCF in 1992, over 23 CBCF sites have been established.

administrator, but rather a health education specialist. Intentionally, "middle managers" (including school building principals) were left out of design and implementation "loop." The director of human services viewed middle management as part of the "impermeable middle layer" (Interview notes, December, 1995). Rather, school social workers were asked to serve as the "link" between the schools and families.

In interviews, principals stated unequivocally that they would not have much to say because they did not know too much about the initiative. All principals were enthusiastic about the idea, and many said that they trusted their school social workers to work well with the initiative. Most principals admitted their limited knowledge about CBCF, but at the same time, they viewed the effort as worthwhile. As one principal added: "I can't imagine going back to the old way of doing business. I hope they don't change the funding and take [school-linked services] away."

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Multi-site Case Study

I approached this study using a two-phase, multi-site case study design. Three urban schools and a low-income neighborhood represented the multiple sites. Phase I of the research drew from a three-year qualitative data base from the neighborhood site; these data were collected by a team of researchers of which I was a part.[3] Phase II of the research was guided by a more "directed inquiry" (Erickson, 1986) as a result of my preliminary analysis in Phase I. The directed inquiry focused on one "bounded system" (Stake, 1988) - the school

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[3] Phase I of this study was part of a larger study entitled, "Community-Based Integrated Services: A Critical Ethnography." Professor Colleen Capper served as the Principal Investigator. The Spencer Foundation provided funding from 1993-1996.

system - rather than on all four participating systems (the others being the departments of public health, law enforcement and social services). Using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978), I refined the analysis of the existing data in Phase II with purposeful subject and setting sampling. In particular, I focused on the organizational arrangements of the three urban schools, and the school professionals related to the school-linked services initiative (I. e., teachers, administrators, pupil services personnel).

Methods of gathering/interpreting data

From Phase I of this qualitative study (spring, 1995 to spring, 1996), I conducted a "secondary analysis" (Majchrzak, 1984) of the existing interview transcripts, documents and observations from the neighborhoods. In Phase II, I refined my inquiry by spending the late spring semester of 1995-1996, and the fall semester of 1996-1997 in the three schools (one elementary, middle school and high school). Similar to the first phase, I gathered data in this second phase through participant-observation, interviews and document review. In total, I interviewed 14 classroom teachers and pupil services professionals using purposive sampling. As well, I attended approximately 16 building-level team meetings in each of the three schools.

In my final analysis of data from Phases I and II, I systematically identified and categorized emerging themes using the iterative steps of constant comparison. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) consider the constant comparative method as the analytic aspect of the multisite case study design, and accordingly, I analyzed the data based on emergent themes and categories.

FINDINGS

As a result of the findings in Phase I of this study in which I examined the process implementing CBCF in the targeted neighborhoods, I began to recognize the incompatible nature of the schools' role in this initiative (Smithmier, 1996). Many of the other participating agencies often commented on how difficult it was to work with the schools: An oversight committee administrator unequivocally stated that "the school has some problems" and that "in this whole education effort we might be able to do some 'mind set' changes and get more out of the schools." She attributed some of the problems to ineffective communication and to lack of power on the part of the school building personnel. Another administrator from the county human services department stated that she believed that the "the role of the schools in this is crucial...but schools are cumbersome." She said that "schools are used to the concept of getting people in the schools, so they're more comfortable [with that role]" (Interview transcript, 1994). Indeed, one of the school members on the interagency team stated that when the idea of the collaborative was proposed by the County Executive and the city, the "school was dragged in kicking and screaming" (Field notes, 1994).

From these observations, I began, in the second phase of this study, to examine more closely the role of the schools as an organizational member in this integrative school-linked services design. In doing so, I question the assumption that schools are monolithic organizations -- that a "school is a school is a school." What follows is an analysis of the intra-organizational components of public schools, such as the layers of professional staff (teachers, administrators and pupil services staff) and the distinctions

between the three school levels (elementary, middle and high school). As well, I examine the schools' inter-organizational capacity, or ability to coordinate effectively with external organizations.

Woodview Elementary School

The elementary school, Woodview, is relatively small at 380 students. The school is fed primarily by one neighborhood, Walnut Grove - the neighborhood in which Community-Based Collaboration for Families is located. Eighty-five percent of the students in this school are on free/reduced lunch. The racial composition of students, like the racial composition in the neighborhood is a mix of minorities and whites. The racial composition of the staff is primarily white and primarily female. The principal is a white female as are the student services staff members. Most of the classroom teachers are white and female with a few exceptions.

According to interviews with elementary students, Woodview school is viewed as a "safe place" and a "nice" place. The students indicated that they feel a kind regard for their teachers and their schooling experiences. At Thanksgiving time, the school social worker explained to me that many students told her they were not looking forward to the four-day vacation. She said four days at home means a lot of fighting and drinking for some kids; for others, she said, it means missing the warms meals that they receive at school. On a weekly basis, the school social worker, the school's family-school liaison or another member of the student services staff, drives out to the neighborhood in the morning to check on students who have unexcused absences. Many students and parents claim that the students often oversleep and miss the one and only bus from the neighborhood. The elementary school has a fund that

has purchased alarm clocks for students who are chronic over sleepers (Field notes, March, 1995). According to interviews with various school staff, Woodview is made up of one of the poorest segments in the district, and the issues that students' home lives represent are devastating. Still, teachers and staff return to Woodview year after year. As the administrator said, "these teachers could go anywhere in the district, but they choose to stay."

Organizationally, Woodview Elementary is "coupled system" with a regular flow of traffic to and from the administrator's open-door office. Teachers and pupil services staff refer to the principal on a first name basis. The staff know one another quite well, and they know of each student that is assigned to each classroom. In the before-school student services meetings, which are referred to as Building Collaboration Team meetings, teachers are free to attend to discuss students who are of particular concern to them. Each week, the Building Collaboration Team, known as the "B team" in this school, meets to discuss students who teachers have brought to their attention. The principal attends along with the school social worker, nurse, psychologist, and guidance counselor. A variety of specialized teachers attend each week as well, including the Title I, Learning Disabled, Emotionally Disturbed, and Speech and Language teachers. The meetings are run in an efficient manner by the principal. The staff members arrive promptly to the meetings at 7:30 a.m. In the winter months that I conducted observations, the meetings are never canceled.

It is during the B team meetings that the school social worker, the liaison to the neighborhood, shares relevant and necessary information from the weekly CBCF meetings - if the information contributes to the general diagnosis of a students' behavioral, performance or attendance issues. In the months of meetings I attended, the school social worker regularly

provided insight with regard to a students' family status (divorce, live-in boyfriend or girlfriend), housing status (eviction, transition, number of residents in apartment), parental drug use or involvement with the police or parole. In some instances, the culmination of information either brought larger neighborhood issues to the attention of school staff, such as a complex web of a multi-family incest situation, or has brought school issues out to the neighborhood, such as a gang awareness meeting with parents and police after students were seen "throwing" gang signs to one another in the school. As the school social worker stated, "We have been able to piece some things together. Working separately, we may not have put the whole thing together. But, after sitting in on police briefings in the neighborhood or learning from teachers that some students are sexually promiscuous, I. . . well, all of us were able to understand the big picture on some of these kids" (Interview notes, December, 1996).

As part of her work day, the school social worker visits each of the classrooms. The teachers invite her in to discuss "social skills." The social worker explained to me that she introduces such subjects as "inappropriate touching" and "conflict resolution" - a far cry from the conventional social skills of "please" and "thank you. On the day I observed her going to classrooms, she carried along large black and white photos of young children's faces. The skill for the day was how to recognize depression or sadness among classmates, and how to approach a depressed or sad child accordingly. At the end of her presentation, as if on cue, the children joined the social worker in what was their ritual closing song:

Be safe, I said, be safe.

I deserve to be safe today.

Be safe, I said, be safe!

Southview Middle School

Southview Middle School is fairly large at nearly 700 students. Over 30 percent of the students receive free/reduced lunch, although the principal stated that she doesn't believe that free/reduced lunch statistics tell "the whole story" about the high needs of the students at her school. Of the 95 staff members, only 10 are minorities. Approximately 20 percent of the student body population is minority. Of the minority students at Southview, most are from the Walnut Grove neighborhood. Walnut Grove is within two miles of Southview, yet public transportation takes students 10 miles out of their way on a very circuitous route from Walnut Grove to Southview adding 20 minutes to students' early morning commute. If students miss the bus in the morning, the bus route takes them to a downtown transfer point making the total commute over 60 minutes. Students often use transportation as an excuse for missing school. Unlike the elementary school staff, only one middle school staff member, an "alternative" classroom teacher, feels compelled to drive to the neighborhood to round up students off of the street. She circles the neighborhood with her family van, and regularly pulls in two or three students to school who otherwise would have skipped for the day.

The layout of the Southview Middle School is awkward in its arrangement. It is partially built into the side of small hill. There is no discernable front entrance to the building. The main entrance is a dark brick foyer that leads to a poorly lit hallway of offices. The main office houses the administrators' offices and is tangential to another corridor that is the student services "suite" of offices. The main floor is void of windows which creates an unfriendly atmosphere. Located on the second floor of the building are the classrooms and the library. The school layout functionally and symbolically separates the "administrative

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types" from the classroom teachers. "To go downstairs" is usually associated with some sort of trouble for students, i.e., meeting with the principal, seeing the counselor, paying a book or lunch fee. Teachers seem to view the downstairs as a source of unease as well. As one teacher said, "You know your day goes a lot better if you stay upstairs" (Interview notes, December, 1996).

Southview is known in the district as an innovative middle school. It was organized into the "house" system over 20 years ago as a way to provide middle school students with continuity during the awkward adolescent period. The students stay with the same class of students and same teacher from 6th grade to 8th grade (Principal interview notes, January, 1997). The school is broken into six houses, and the two assistant principals are each assigned three houses as part of their administrative assignment. Administration has dubbed the two groups of houses as "duplexes." Student services personnel are also divided among the six houses. There are two social workers, two psychologists and two guidance counselors. Their "duplex" assignment evenly divides them into two student services teams of three. While the organizational design is meant to provide continuity for students, it effectively fragments the support staff and further isolates the teachers from working together. A guidance counselor in the middle school observed that the organization of the school reflects "a psycho-social dynamic that promotes competition and fragmentation. The organizational arrangement of this school does not promote a more holistic and integrated approach to our work" (Field notes, November, 1996).

The organizational arrangement of dividing the student services staff among the six houses certainly posed difficulties for the liaison assigned to CBCF. Again, one social

worker from each school is assigned as liaison to CBCF. However, the social worker from Southview was assigned to only work with half of the school - her duplex of three houses. Any effort to create a bridge between CBCF and the remaining three houses needed to be accomplished through administrative meetings and through her social work counterpart, with whom she met only once a week.

The Southview Middle School was not without meeting opportunities, however. There are a variety of mechanisms for communication among administrators, student services staff and teachers. There are "duplex meetings" in which one assistant principal, a team of student services personnel and three house teachers meet together. These meetings are held twice a month. There are "building team collaboration" meetings at which all six student services staff meet with at least one assistant principal and the principal. And there are human services meetings, which are just attended by the student services staff. Assistant principals also meet separately with student services staff which they actually refer to as "triplex" meetings. In this dizzying array of duplex and triplex meetings, one would think that sufficient opportunity is created to convey necessary and relevant information related to the CBCF initiative. In fact, when I began my field study at Southview to examine CBCF, the student services personnel and one assistant principal could not identify for me, upon my asking, who the CBCF liaison was to Walnut Grove. I assumed it would be one of the two social workers, but could not be sure. Rather than ask around further, I decided to observe meetings until I could discern who among the student services staff served as the CBCF liaison. By the semester's end, it was still not apparent, and I eventually learned by asking the principal.

One explanation for the lack of presence of CBCF at Southview is that they had, in effect, "reconceptualized" the link between the school and the community. Since my study of CBCF began in 1994, already three different liaisons had been assigned to the neighborhood. In the first year, 1993-1994, the liaison (a school social worker who has since left the school) was easily spending half the day at Walnut Grove to establish linkages between the school and the community. The principal tried to limit his participation in the neighborhood CBCF efforts explaining that he was badly needed back at the school (Social worker interview notes, February, 1994). In 1994-1995, the CBCF position was assigned to a former classroom teacher who had taken on some administrative duties at the school. In his capacity, he attempted to establish a community-based classroom setting at which students and parents could gather to meet with Southview teachers one evening per week. An apartment was rented by the district across the hall from the CBCF office. After one semester, teachers grew frustrated with this arrangement in the neighborhood because student and parent turnout was minimal. To further facilitate communication between the neighborhood and the school, the CBCF liaison tried to install a computer lab in the neighborhood that was connected to the school. The setting quickly became associated with "the school," and parents and students viewed it as a "detention center" for failing students. In a story in the local paper, one neighborhood resident accused the "white man" (CBCF liaison) of creating a "holding pen for little black boys" (local newspaper story, May 1995) After ill feelings and tension subsided between the parents and the school, the computer lab was eventually accepted as a neighborhood resource provided by the school.

In 1995-1996, the Southview School asked the district to allocate a full-time teacher to

the computer lab. The former CBCF liaison stepped aside, and an African-American female teacher was assigned full-time to the neighborhood. To many residents in Walnut Grove, and even to some of the Southview School staff, the community-based classroom is viewed as a way to "farm out" the troubled kids. A student services staff member told me he viewed the neighborhood classroom as a "seventh house," and that he felt that students were "over referred" to the neighborhood. "We send kids out of here like water through our hands, because we can not - or we choose not - to deal with them here" (Field notes, November, 1996).

In effect, rather than integrate CBCF into the functions of Southview Middle School, the school had managed to reformulate the initiative into a familiar arrangement that made sense for their purposes - a classroom off the school premises. The presence of CBCF in the Southview Middle School is vague at best, misrepresented at worst. As one teacher said, "CBCF? Is that the suspension room out in Walnut Grove?"

Lakeland High School

The high school, Lakeland, that serves the Walnut Grove neighborhood is fed by six other racially and socio-economically diverse neighborhoods. Consequently, the racial and socio-economic composition of its student body population is diverse. The ratio of white to minority students was roughly 7 to 1. There are no minority full-time classroom teachers, and one minority administrator. Though located on the working class side of town, poverty was not an overwhelming concern for the high school as it is for the elementary school.

The organizational blueprint of Lakeland High School was traditional and fairly predictable. The principal was a white male; he was assisted by four assistant principals who

were each responsible for a grade level (9-12). The four principals were mixed in racial and gender composition: one white female, one black male and two white males. Administrators met collectively on a weekly basis. At these meetings, to which an area police officer was invited, the administrators discussed student behavioral issues that impacted the running of the school. The formal mechanism for communication among administrators and student services staff was at the weekly human services meetings. Assistant principals rotated from week to week so that one of them was always in attendance. Teachers did not attend these meetings.

In my efforts to gain access to the high school as a study sight, I inquired with two assistant principals and two social workers as to where I would most likely observe the linkages between the CBCF initiative and the school. It proved very telling that administrators and student services staff could not easily identify a forum or mechanism that most revealed the established linkages. As if making guesses, various staff members provided different suggestions to me that proved fruitless venues for studying the CBCF linkage to the school. The principal recommended the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse committee, another administrator recommended the Special Education/Multidisciplinary team meetings. The school psychologist recommended that I "shadow" staff instead of attending meetings, such as the Emotional or Cognitive Development teachers, the Vocational Education teacher and/or one of the two school social workers. Her concern was of student confidentiality. After some discussion about my understanding of the confidentiality of student issues, it was decided that I would attend the student services weekly meetings per the suggestion of the principal. The general picture of how the CBCF initiative fit in the school was vague among school staff, and its place within the school was understood differently depending on who I

asked. This ambiguity seemed to indicate early on that CBCF did not have an integrative function in the school.

In an interview, the liaison to the neighborhood, the more senior of the two school social workers, voiced unequivocally that she saw the integrated school-linked services effort as a "waste of time" and "irrelevant." She also said that she only felt comfortable sharing knowledge and information "with a trusted group of professionals." To underscore her value on expert knowledge, she said: "When you get people in all sorts of capacities and all kinds of role, and in all kinds of educational and understanding levels, my sharing (at meetings) is much more guarded" (Interview notes, December, 1995). Whether the school social worker viewed her colleagues on the student services staff as "a trusted group of professionals" or not is unclear, for she almost never introduced CBCF information into the student services weekly meetings. From my observations at the CBCF meetings, I noted that she very rarely participated in the two-hour long meetings in the neighborhood. Her lack of participation in the neighborhood meetings, and her voiced disregard for CBCF, indicated that she did not view her CBCF counterparts as "trusted professionals."

In the several months that I observed her participation in student services meetings, only once was CBCF mentioned in discussion. In this instance, the name of a freshman boy was brought to the group's attention because a teacher had reported to the guidance counselor that he was failing most of his classes. This boy was a resident of the Walnut Grove neighborhood. I knew him from my two years of interviews and observations in the Walnut Grove neighborhood. I knew his mother and some of his five siblings. I knew, from my frequent visits to the neighborhood CBCF office, that his mother had recently received an

eviction notice from their three bedroom apartment due to unsanitary conditions.

The school psychologist pulled his file and read aloud to the group that the student had been assessed with Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome in elementary school. After some discussion, one of the counselors pointed out that the student was the brother of a well-known trouble maker in the school. "Well, that explains it all," replied another counselor in an off-color fashion. After a long pause, the social worker assigned to CBCF finally interjected and said, "It doesn't explain it all. . .There are things going on at home." With that, the conversation halted. She said nothing more of the boy's Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS) condition; she offered nothing to the group about the upcoming eviction. She offered no insight to the group that he was one of six kids to an unemployed single parent.

The essence behind the role of schools in school-linked services is designed to comprehensively meet students' basic needs in an effort to promote and support learning for students. What might have proved a productive problem-solving session among school counselors, psychologists, social workers and a nurse was instead passed off as another "outdated file." Dropping the boys' folder on the floor, the school psychologist called for an updated PTSS assessment, and moved onto the next student's name. Rather than give more holistic consideration to this young boy's larger issues, his academic failure was attributed to PTSS which was then compartmentalized into the familiar role and function of a "needs assessment." No plan or strategy to get his academic performance on track was forwarded by any members of the group.

Intra-organizational and inter-organizational compatibility issues with integrated school-linked services

Common among the three schools was the "layering" of the school professionals: the core team of classroom teachers buffered by a layer of student service professionals all under the oversight of the school administrators. The administrators, with the exception of the elementary school, were divided into two layers: principals and assistant principals. High school and middle school teachers, by design, were effectively isolated from other professionals in the building - attending to classroom duties and not attending the battery of weekly organizational meetings with administrators and student services staff. In the elementary, middle and high schools, the student services staff, (school psychologist, social worker, guidance counselor and nurse), had their own internal hierarchy, beginning with the school psychologist as highest status, and school nurse as lowest status. I was told by administrators and student services personnel that this hierarchy reflected years of schooling and accompanying salary, but not necessarily authority within the student services department.

Internally weak linkages and weak alliances among the layers of professional staff in the school certainly poses challenges for a reform design such as school-linked services - a design that converges on the theme of coordination and which assumes collaboration among participants. Integrated school-linked services is based on the premise that schools and other agencies (i.e., public health, social services, juvenile justice, housing) which share work with similar "clients" combine their efforts in a collaborative manner. The integrated school-linked services reform design asks the participating agencies to work differently - collaboratively and integratively. What this requires is a structural mechanism on the part of each agency to act

as the "link" between and among the participating agencies.

For Community-Based Collaboration for Families, the structural "link" between the schools and the other agencies was designated by the school district to be the school social worker or "any other appropriate liaison" from each participating school. Student services, as a department, has not traditionally been tightly coupled within the organization of schools (Rowan, 1982), and this was certainly true of the schools that I studied. The school social worker is one player within the student services department, and the student services staff is one layer within the organization of the school.

Each professional layer - the teachers, administrators, and student services - brought to their role a different set of skills, different licensing, different training and background, and different orientations toward the student. These differences, while each contributing to the complexity of schooling, did not always provide a natural alliance among school personnel. An assistant principal in the high school viewed her school staff as very fragmented and compartmentalized. She said that the teachers remain isolated and "make little effort to connect with the kids outside of their class." As well, she viewed the student services staff as a "department unto their own." She said that if it were not for the administrators "jockeying between all of these departments, there would be no communication" (Field notes, December, 1996). A middle school social worker observed that she sees the role of the student services team as "filling a 'function' in place of a 'dysfunction' on the part of the administration" (Field notes, October, 1996). On the other hand, some classroom teachers did not see that the student services professionals were providing a function at all. In response to my query about how teachers and student services personnel address the more high needs students, a middle

school teacher told me that she did not see that the student services group provided a "decent service," so teachers have learned to work around them. "Pupil services people are not teachers; they do not know what it is like to teach kids; they whine about the little bit of teaching they are asked to do, and they wring their hands over the kids' issues. They don't serve teachers, so teachers don't use their services" (Field notes, November, 1996).

The student services personnel were only slightly integral to the teaching and learning functions of the schools. In fact, not unlike the statement made by the middle school teacher above, many teachers did not understand what student services staff could provide for them or what kind of "service" they offered. With regard to the school-linked services effort (that had by now been in place for over three years), teachers were unsure and even unaware of the multi-agency service effort. A high school principal stated: "Very honestly, probably not very many of our teachers know about [the integrated services effort]. . .about half do." One teacher stated, "I'll find out about it when it is important to me." Another teacher said: "Teachers have good reasons for staying isolated [from student services/school-linked services]. If they can get somebody else to work with the hard stuff, you know, the kids who have a lot of problems, then they [teachers] don't have to worry about anything but getting the students to pass" (Interview, May, 1995).

Consistent with the dominant literature on school organization which suggests that school structure is decoupled from the central activities of schooling (Meyer and Rowan, 1978; Scott and Meyer, 1983), I observed decoupling across the three levels of schools in this study, but to different degrees at each school level. Between the elementary, secondary and high school levels, I observed distinct differences with regard to within-school or intra-

organizational capacity. School staffing patterns grew in complexity, diversity and size in ascending order from elementary to high school. With increased complexity at an intra-organizational level, schools' efforts to coordinate effectively inter-organizationally, for example with school-linked services, become more difficult. The schools' capacity to coordinate internally seemed to determine the school's ability to coordinate externally.

Summary

The degree of decoupling within each school, and the capacity to make relevant linkages among school staff seemed to vary greatly from school level to school level with regard to the implementation of Community-Based Collaboration for Families. The elementary school seemed to have the organizational capacity to link neighborhood-based services issues to the classroom and to other school staff. The high school proved least capable of making integral the relevant information from the neighborhood.[4] The middle school proved mixed in its ability to make the connection to the classroom and to other school staff. The schools' capacity for linking to the integrated services effort may be explained by understanding that the three levels of school (elementary, middle and high school) are organized differently, coupled differently, and hold different expectations for the function of the staff members. Or, the obscure place that this school-linked services effort was taking in the school may be attributable to the fact that the assigned representative from the schools was the school social worker. The school social worker is only one member of the school, and arguably a "decoupled" member of the school. It may also be true that no

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[4] A second high school, a high school that is fed by another targeted neighborhood, declined to participate in Community-Based Collaboration for Families because they viewed the efforts as "irrelevant" to their student population.

matter who served as the link to the neighborhood-based school-linked services effort, the important exchanges between and among participating organizations would remain disconnected from the whole of the school due to the decoupled nature of school organization. Schools, with perhaps the exception of elementary schools, are not linked tightly internally which makes linking with external services even more difficult.

To partially support my observations, Firestone and Herriott (1980, 1982) found that elementary and high schools differ radically in their coupling between organizational authority and staff activity. Elementary schools, they found, tend to be formal hierarchies and tightly bound to authority, whereas high schools tend to be more autonomous and loosely coupled from authority. Other school organization scholars have made similar findings. The differences in school levels are not only a matter of size and organizational complexity but of culture and function as well (Louis, Marks and Kruse, 1996; Hoy and Miskel, 1987). Elementary schools have greater goals consensus, and in the absence of subject matter experts, the elementary teachers share more tasks within the school. In the secondary schools, subject matter affiliation is strong which requires more administrative functions, thus limiting teacher participation in the larger school. Elementary school staff tend to share a holistic view of the student-as-child providing parent-like relationships and nurturance, whereas secondary school staff are likely to have a "nonarticulated" view of students (Louis, et al., 1996).

The weak link to the core of schooling is not unlike what other researchers have found in various studies on school-linked services (Wehlage, Smith and Lipman, 1992; Smylie, Crowson, Chou, Levin, 1995). Schools compartmentalize the integrated school-linked

services to fit into an preordained organizational arrangement, rather than adapting it as part of a systemic or comprehensive approach to meeting student needs.

The aggregative, rather than integrative, design of school is to institutionalize functions into a set of subsystems (administrators as distinct from teachers as distinct from student services) which work simultaneously with students, but do not work together in a coherent or integrative fashion. The school-linked services initiative, as demonstrated in this multi-site case study, offers nothing by way of design to remedy the isolated and fragmented nature of the subsystems.

Consequently, while the health, social and juvenile justice services might be moving toward a model of integrated services, the link with the school is more likely to be aggregative than integrative. No matter how tightly integrated and collaborative the school-linked services model, the school organization is not designed to respond similarly. As the school district representative, who is assigned to the oversight of the CBCF initiative, said: "I don't think that institutionally we have changed...[we] offer a continuum of services...we have work-learn, school-within-a-school. [School-linked services] is just another alternative model, an add-on."

Implications for educational policy

Schools are not unlike other large social systems and institutions. Medical, mental health and social service sectors are characterized by high levels of fragmentation as well, and the degree of integration between and among these agencies and subunit functions remains low (Rowan, 1982; Meyer, 1983a; Cohen and Spillane, 1992). The more specific the function, the less generalizable the focus between and among other agencies and subunits.

Since the rapid growth of government social initiatives in the 1960s and 1970s, there have been extensive efforts to develop centralized coordinating strategies and mechanisms to bring coherence among and between the various agencies, but to little effect (Rogers and Whetten, 1981).

There are many structural constraints within the design of the school organization which are an impediment to implementing reforms such as school-linked integrated services. Idiosyncratic communication patterns and the informal flow of information, or barring the exchange of information based on "expert knowledge" vs. "pedestrian" knowledge. Another constraint to a coherent, integrative organizational design is the decoupled nature or professional layering of staff. Although educational professionals share the same "client" - the student - the professional fragmentation and decoupling keeps school staff from discussing and focusing collectively on the larger issues. A reform initiative that asks otherwise fragmented professionals to work in an holistic, comprehensive manner assumes that fragmentation is easily remedied.

Is this to suggest that centralized bureaucracies are the answer to implementing reform ideas that call for coherence, collaboration and integration? Not necessarily. Coherent or centralized functions do not necessarily have to be synonymous with formal bureaucracies that rely on chains of command and are bound tightly to authority and control. For example, this study suggests that because of the nature of the elementary school design, the organizational patterns of elementary schools are more compatible with implementing reform ideas that converge on themes of integration and collaboration. Literature on school-linked services and crisis prevention and early intervention overlaps with early childhood education,

therefore elementary schools are the more likely choice for implementing a reform design such as school-linked services.

Until the design of educational reform initiatives - school-linked services being just one of them - take into consideration a thorough understanding of how schools are designed as aggregative organization of subsystems, schools will most likely only accommodate reform ideas as "add ons." Future research might reveal that the likelihood of successful reform implementation (i.e., school-to-work transition, integrated curriculum, etc.) is determined by prior understandings of the nature of school organizational structures, functions and practices.

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